

# Q and A with Patty Berg



California Assemblywoman Patty Berg, who sponsored the Right to Know End-of-Life Options Act along with Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, speaks to Compassion & Choices.

**C&C:** What motivated you to sponsor this bill?

**PB:** For the past three years, I carried, unsuccessfully, the Compassionate Choices Act replicating Oregon's Death with Dignity law. I was passionate about seeing it become the law of the land in California, and I was amazed and aghast by the controversy this bill generated and the lack of political will to move it forward.

We all know that death is inevitable. Yet, the process of dying with a terminal illness can either be a horrific experience, or one that focuses on quality of life. The latter recognizes that the dying person should always be in control and be aware of all the available treatment options in order to best choose how they die.

The sad truth is that too many people are unaware of their legal options - mainly because physicians, for whatever reason, don't have these end-of-life conversations with their patients. I hope to right that wrong.

**C&C:** Why do you think it's important for California residents to have the right to know their options?

**PB:** It's about choice. It's about quality of death as it is in life. It's about peace of mind in knowing you don't have to suffer. ©



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## Hospice Tips

### What is hospice?

Hospice care is provided by a team of professionals and volunteers trained to address the medical, social, emotional and spiritual needs of a patient who is in the terminal phase of an illness and is no longer seeking life-prolonging treatment.

A physician makes a referral when the prognosis is determined to be six months or less. The hospice team provides what's known as "palliative care," which focuses on eliminating suffering and providing comfort and support. The team is also dedicated to insuring a dignified death.

### Obtaining a hospice referral:

If you have not already discussed hospice with your physician, we suggest that you do so. To help you have this discussion with your physician, the following sample conversation may serve as a guide:

"I want to have a conversation with you about how I can maintain control of my life as my illness progresses. I appreciate all you have done to help me fight this disease, but I have come to a place where I want to redirect my remaining energy. The quality of my life is much more important to me than the number of days I have left.

"I believe it is time to talk about a referral to hospice and 'comfort care' only. I want my pain to be kept under control, and I want to be kept comfortable until my death - even if this means I might sleep all of the time. If I am unable to find a caregiver, I would like a referral to an in-patient facility with hospice support."

Find more hospice tips online at [www.compassionandchoices.org](http://www.compassionandchoices.org).